

## Message Text

SECRET

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63

ACTION SS-25

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----- 073888

R 011521Z MAR 76  
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 562  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T CAIRO 2729

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG

SUBJECT: CURRENT GOE THINKING OF MINBAR QUESTION

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: AKHBAR AL-YAWM FEB 28 CARRIES  
ARTICLE SPECULATING THAT ASU COMMITTEE ON "FORUMS" (MINBARS)  
WILL PROBABLY RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT SADAT THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF ONLY THREE MINBARS, REFLECTING RIGHT, CENTER AND LEFT  
OPINIONS. PRESIDENT IS EXPECTED TO ADDRESS NATION ON "FORUM"  
ISSUE SOME TIME BETWEEN MARCH 15 AND END OF MONTH. END  
UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEGIN SECRET: COMMENT: AS DEPT AWARE, THE "FORUM"  
ISSUE HAS BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION IN GOE POLITICAL  
CIRCLES FOR OVER SIX MONTHS. PRESIDENT LET IT BE KNOWN THAT  
"FORUMS" WOULD BE PERMITTED IN SEPTEMBER. IMMEDIATELY  
THEREAFTER NUMEROUS PARLIAMENTARIANS REGISTERED THEIR  
INTENTION TO ESTABLISH SUCH ORGANIZATIONS (75 CAIRO 11827).  
NUMBER EXCEEDED THIRTY BY END OF NOVEMBER AND SADAT  
HAD TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO ASU/SYG MAGHUB AND PEOPLE'S  
ASSEMBLY SPEAKER SAYED MAREI TO GET MATTERS BACK ON  
TRACK (CAIRO 1204). SINCE THAT TIME, DISCUSSIONS HAVE TAKEN  
PLACE IN ASU AND PA ABOUT FORMATION OF A SMALLER NUMBER  
OF SUCH "FORUMS".

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3. IN FACT, THE PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF DISCUSSIONS ON THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN IN THE PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY SATURDAY "KITCHEN CABINET" MEETINGS WITH VP MOBAREK, PRIMIN SALIM, FAHMY AND SAYED MAREI. ACCORDING TO FAHMY, THE PRESIDENT INITIALLY HAD IN MIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THREE INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PARTIES--ONE, THE ASU, AND THE OTHER TWO, RIGHTIST AND LEFTIST PARTIES RESPECTIVELY (AS RECENTLY AS TWO WEEKS AGO THE PRESIDENT TOLD THE AMB HE HAD THIS IN MIND). IN THE SPECIAL KITCHEN CABINET, SAYED MAREI HAS FAVORED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTIES, BELIEVING THAT HE WOULD BE A LOGICAL CHOICE TO HEAD ONE. PRIMIN MAMDUH SALIM HAS OPPOSED PARTIES, ARGUING EGYPTIANS ARE NOT YET READY FOR A FULL-SCALE PARTY SYSTEM. FAHMY HAS FAVORED PARTIES, BUT URGED THAT THE PRESIDENT HEAD THE GOVERNMENT PARTY. SADAT HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO DO SO ON THE GROUNDS THAT THIS WOULD INHIBIT GENUINE OPPOSITION. INSTEAD, HE HAS INSISTED THAT PRIMIN SALIM HEAD THE "GOVERNMENT" GROUPING.

4. MORE RECENTLY THE PRESIDENT HAS COME AROUND TO PRIMIN SALIM'S VIEW THAT EGYPT IS NOT YET READY FOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND HAS BACKED AWAY FROM THIS CONCEPT. INSTEAD, AS A BEGINNING, HE HAS GONE BACK TO THE "FORUM" CONCEPT. THERE WILL BE THREE SUCH "FORUMS"--ONE, THE GOVERNMENT FORUM HEADED BY PRIMIN SALIM; THE SECOND, A RIGHTIST "FORUM" WHOSE LEADER WILL HAVE TO BE DETERMINED; AND THE THIRD, A "LIBERAL" FORUM. FAHMY STATES PRESIDENT WISHES TO AVOID SUGGESTING A LEFTIST "FORUM" SINCE THIS MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE FORMER EGYPTIAN COMMUNIST PARTY TO TRY TO TAKE CHARGE OF THIS THIRD GROUPING. THE THREE "FORUMS" WILL BE UNDER THE GENERAL AEGIS OF THE ASU, BUT FAHMY THOUGHT THE ASU WILL LOSE ITS PRESENT FUNCTIONS AND GRADUALLY WITHER AWAY (IN SUPPORT OF THIS VIEW, SENIOR GOE OFFICIALS HAVE COMMENTED ABOUT ASU/SYG MAGHUB'S RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT HIS FATHER WAS A WAFDIST AND SO WAS HIS GRANDFATHER. THEY HAVE READ THIS TO MEAN THAT MAGHUB IS RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTING THE FACT THAT THE ASU IS ON ITS WAY OUT AND IS SIGNALLING HIS DESIRE TO PLAY A PART IN ONE OF THE "FORUMS"). FAHMY IS NOT OVERLY PLEASED THAT PRIMIN SALIM WILL HEAD THE "GOVERNMENT FORUM", SINCE HE POINTS OUT SALIM IS BY BACKGROUND A POLICEMAN AND HAS NO REAL KNOWLEDGE OF A POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM. HOWEVER, AS A  
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STEP IN THE LIBERALIZATION OF THE EGYPTIAN POLITICAL SCENE, HE ACCEPTS IT.

5. FAHMY CONFIRMS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S MID-MARCH ADDRESS TO THE NATION WILL ANNOUNCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THREE SUCH "FORUMS".  
EILTS

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